



# NEWSLETTER

*Issue 4/10 August 2010 - September 2010*

## Hunter Bird Observers Club Inc affiliated with Bird Observation and Conservation Australia

### Swift Parrot and Regent Honeyeater Surveys – August 2010

The next Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot survey weekend is on **7-8 August** and we are keen to get as many people out and about looking for these birds as possible again. Surveys in our area are particularly important as the Hunter is likely to be one of the most important areas in Australia for these species, especially Regents. Please contact me if you're interested in being involved and I'll point you in the right direction. You won't need to travel too far if you don't want to – I'm sure I can find a site for you to survey within an hour's drive of your home.

In contrast to 2009, the Spotted Gum / Ironbark Forests around Cessnock and Kurri have not produced a great deal of blossom. However, good numbers of both species were recorded here last year, particularly around Pelton and Kitchener, so it is always worth checking these areas out. There has been a smattering of Swift records in the Hunter this year, some from the coast (Swamp Mahogany forests) and some from around Cessnock (Spotted Gum / Ironbark Forests), whilst the "party" seems to be over for the Regents at Milbrodale, with no records there since early June. The challenge is to try and relocate Regents again!

Obviously, we are interested in records of these birds outside of the survey weekends. If you encounter either Swift Parrots or Regent Honeyeaters please report it to the BA coordinators (Swift Parrots – 1800 665 766; Regent Honeyeaters – 1800 621 056) or contact me on 0421 761237 or via email [mickhnb@yahoo.com.au](mailto:mickhnb@yahoo.com.au) and I will relay the information.

**Mick Roderick**

### The aims of the club are:

- To encourage and further the study and conservation of Australian birds and their habitat;
- To encourage bird observing as a leisure-time activity

President	Paul Baird	4938 5039
Vice-President	Mick Roderick	0421 761 237
Secretary	Marj Kibby	4969 7413
Treasurer	Joy Nicholls	4957 3612
Committee Member	Grant Brosie	4934 7383
Committee Member	Tom Clarke	4951 3872
Committee Member	Darryl Luck	4982 9248
Committee Member	Ian Martin	4943 9256
Committee Member	Lorna Mee	4988 6579
Conservation Coordinator	Ann Lindsey	4951 2008
Activities Officer	Lorna Mee	4988 6579
Records Officer	Sue Hamonet	4958 1023
Librarian (books, CDs)	Colin Goodenough	0408 664 220
Librarian (slides)	John Cockerell	4945 3008
Newsletter Editor	Liz Crawford	4959 3663

Please send Newsletter articles direct to the Editor at:  
[chrisliz@tpg.com.au](mailto:chrisliz@tpg.com.au)

Deadline for the next edition is 30 September 2010.

HBOC postal address: PO Box 24 New Lambton NSW 2305

Website: [www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)

# HBOC Activities - August to October 2010

DATE	EVENT	MEETING PLACE & TIME	CONTACT
<b>Wednesday 11 August</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speakers: Chris Tzaros and Dean Ingwersen – Birds Australia’s “Woodland Birds for Biodiversity” Project</b>
Tuesday 17 August	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 <b>Please ring to confirm</b>
Sunday 22 August	Field Outing to Abernethy	7.30am Neath Hotel	Mick Roderick 0421 761 237
Wednesday 25 August	White Ibis nest count, Hunter Wetlands Centre	7.00am car park, Hunter Wetlands Centre	Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 <b>Wear long sleeves, trousers &amp; gumboots if wet.</b>
Saturday 28 August	Hunter Wader Survey	9.30 am Ash Island 10.00 am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Ann Lindsey 4951 2008 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago
Wednesday 1 September	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Friday 3 September	Saltmarsh restoration (mangrove removal)	Milham Pond, Ash Island from 7.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Sunday 5 September	Volunteer day at SSS – sweeps for woody weeds	Stockton Sandspit 8.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Tuesday 7 September	Mid-Week Outing Ash Island	8.00am Car park just over bridge to Ash Island	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265
<b>Wednesday 8 September</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speaker: Ann Lindsey - Ann’s Amazing Antarctic Avifauna Adventure</b>
Mon -Wednesday 13-15 September	Mid-Week Camp	Dorrigo Mountain Resort, Dorrigo	Garth Cooksey 4954 9620
Wed - Friday 15 - 17 September	IBA monitoring for Rufous Scrub-bird in Gloucester Tops	Camp at Sharpes Creek on Wed 15 and Thurs 16	Alan Stuart 4952 8569
Friday 17 September	Saltmarsh restoration (mangrove removal)	Milham Pond, Ash Island from 7.00am	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Saturday 18th September	Birdwatch near Bengalla Mine	8.00am – 10.30am, Bengalla Road, Muswellbrook	Tom Clarke 0418411785
Sunday 19 September	Field Outing to “Will-o-Wyn”, Murrays Run	8.00am Park just west of Wollombi Hotel	Melva Fisher 4951 1223 <b>Please ring to confirm</b>
Tuesday 21 September	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 <b>Please ring to confirm</b>
Saturday 25 September	Hunter Wader Survey	8.30 am Ash Island 9.00 am Various locations as directed	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 – Ash Island Chris Herbert 4959 3663 – Kooragang Jack Adams 4971 5334 – Swansea Jenny Powers 4944 7274 – Stockton Grant Brosie 4934 7383 - Tomago
Saturday - Monday 2 - 4 October	Camp at Cattai Wetlands, near Coopernook	<b>Please contact Alan Stuart for directions</b>	Alan Stuart 4952 8569 <b>Please ring to confirm as access is restricted</b>
Tuesday 5 October	Mid-Week Outing Rathmines	7.30am Styles Point Reserve off Overhill Rd Rathmines	Leader: Garth Cooksey 4954 9620
Wednesday 6 October	Management Committee Meeting	6.30pm – 9.30pm Garden Suburbs School	All members welcome
Monday- Wednesday 11-13 October	IBA monitoring for Rufous Scrub-bird in Gloucester Tops	Camp at Sharpes Creek on Mon 11 and Tues 12 October	Alan Stuart 4952 8569
<b>Wednesday 13 October</b>	<b>Club Meeting</b>	<b>7.30pm The Wetlands Centre</b>	<b>Speaker: Dean Portelli – Hall’s Babblers</b>
Tuesday 19 October	Tomago Wetlands Survey	7.30am Entry to Tomago House	Neville McNaughton 4951 1265 <b>Please ring to confirm</b>
Saturday 23 October	Hunter Wader Survey	8.30 am Ash Island 9.00 am Various locations as directed	Contacts as for September wader survey

## Important Bird Areas in the Hunter Region

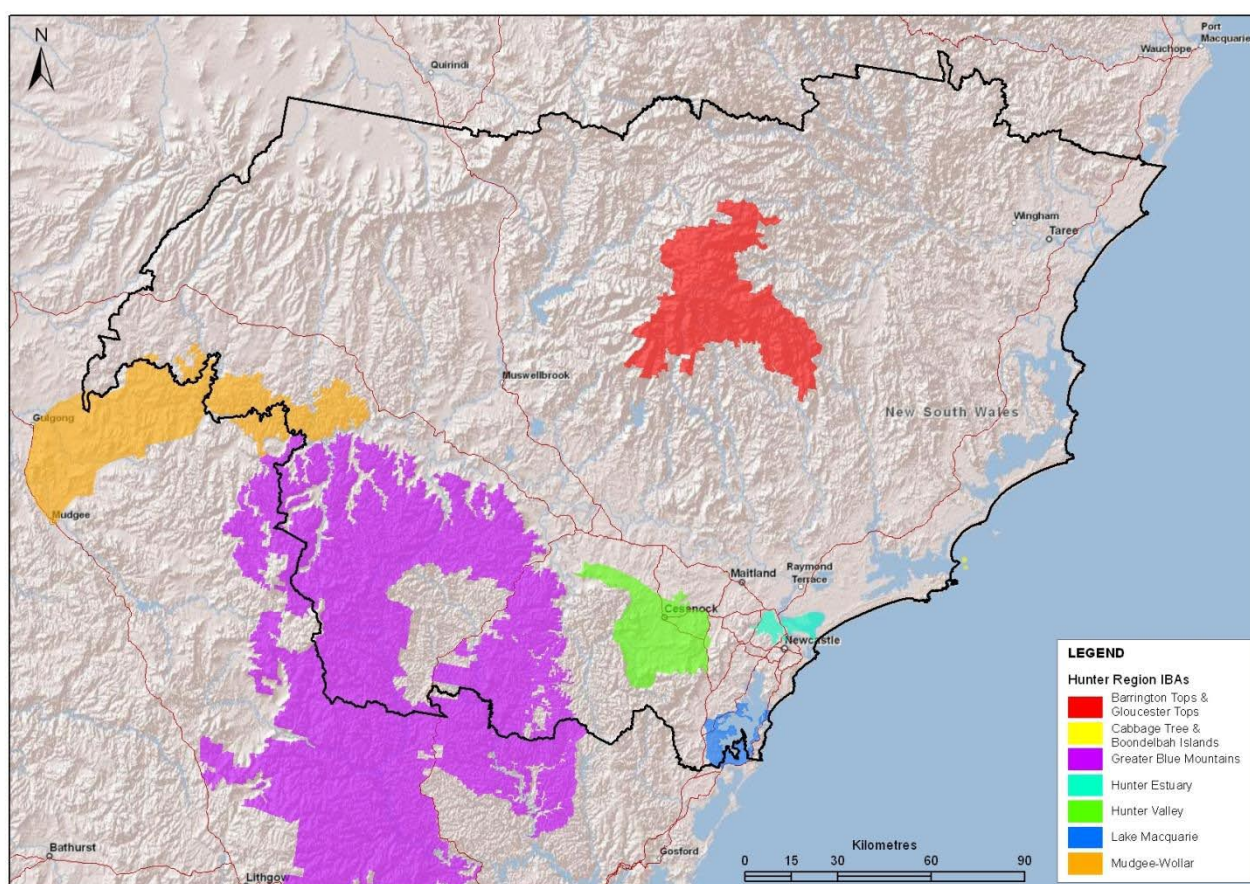
During 2006-2009, many Australian locations were nominated to be registered internationally as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). There is no legal standing to an IBA but it brings a higher profile for an area. For an area to be classified as an IBA it has to meet criteria set by Birdlife International. One important criterion is whether the area hosts significant numbers of any species that are endangered, have restricted ranges or congregate in large groups (with >1% of the world population). From the nomination/ selection process now completed, seven IBAs lie in or straddle the Hunter Region:

- Hunter Estuary IBA: based on records for 6 species of shorebird/waterbird (this IBA also includes Hexham Swamp Nature Reserve (NR) and Pambalong NR)
- Lake Macquarie IBA: based on Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot records
- Cabbage Tree Island/Boondelbah Island IBA: based on Gould's Petrel records

- Hunter Valley IBA: based on Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot records
- Barrington Tops/Gloucester Tops IBA: based on records for Rufous Scrub-bird and 6 rainforest species
- Mudgee-Wollar IBA: based on Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot records (for us, the important part of this IBA is Goulburn River National Park)
- Greater Blue Mountains IBA: based on Rockwarbler and 5 other species (for us, the important part of this IBA is Wollemi National Park (NP) and Yengo NP)

The locations for the Hunter Region IBAs are shown below (many thanks to Dan Williams for the map!).

The international requirements include that each IBA is monitored regularly for its designated key species and a report is issued about the “health” of the IBA. At the June Committee Meeting, your





## Important Bird Areas cont

club decided to get on board, by adopting the seven Hunter Region IBAs and developing monitoring and reporting protocols. The Cabbage Tree Island/Boondelbah Island IBA is being looked after by National Parks & Wildlife Service and so it is the other six IBAs that need our greater attention.

For some mad reason, I put my hand up to coordinate what HBOC does – but I will need a lot of help in this and I am looking very keenly for additional assistance. For starters, I would like to find 1 or 2 people to volunteer to become Champions for each of the individual IBAs. We will work out the responsibilities of a Champion, which probably will vary a bit depending which IBA it is – but the main role would be to help with organising surveys and dealing with the data and also with the educational and promotional aspects. Concerning education/ promotion, there seems a real opportunity to capitalise on the IBA concept to get better outcomes for our local birds. For example, we could develop PR packages about each IBA and send to the relevant local media, and we could use plans and outcomes from monitoring activities for both community education and publicity opportunities.

The existence now of these new IBAs will influence our planning for club activities. Already you will see in the program for the remainder of the year that we have some IBA monitoring activities scheduled and you can expect to see a further increased emphasis in the 2011 program.

If you would like to know more about IBAs, go to <http://www.birdata.com.au/iba.vm>. And if you would be interested in talking with me about becoming involved with one or more of the IBAs, I would love to hear from you.

**Alan Stuart**

Email: [almarosa@bigpond.com](mailto:almarosa@bigpond.com)

Phone: 0409 978 171

### Rufous Scrub-bird Monitoring in Barrington Tops and Gloucester Tops IBA

Five IBAs in NSW/Queensland were chosen because of their importance for the Rufous Scrub-bird (a species which also is considered to be an important indicator of climate change, due to its restricted highland range). It is important to monitor how these birds are faring. As most of you know, it is a very difficult bird to see. And so we have been liaising with Birds Australia and DECCW about how best to carry out surveys that can be consistent from year to year and able to be used across all five IBAs. We have a plan and will be putting it to its first test over September 15-17, with a follow-up survey about a month later. We will camp at Sharpes Creek two nights, and spend most of the Thursday and Friday in the Gloucester Tops area surveying for RSBs, after a training activity on the Wednesday afternoon. If you can come along to help, please do – the more participants we have, the more territories we are likely to find. Somebody from the Tweed Bird Observers Club will be joining us so that they can learn and transfer the survey methods into their local IBA.



# Woodland bird detectability in the Lower Hunter

by Kristy Peters



This is a brief summary of my Honours thesis '*The occurrence and detectability of rare and common woodland birds in the Lower Hunter Region of NSW*' completed in November 2009.

## Motivations for the study

A variety of bird survey methods are being used by environmental consultants and researchers within the Lower Hunter to support environmental assessments and to form the basis of long-term monitoring programs. There is currently no scientifically supported survey standard, therefore, the level of survey effort undertaken and spatial and temporal replication employed is highly variable<sup>1</sup>. Poor experimental design, insufficient survey effort and lack of replication across seasons and years have the potential to lead to inappropriate development being approved in areas of high conservation value for woodland bird species. Survey results are also likely to be affected by imperfect detectability of a wide range of bird species; in particular, rare species or those that have cryptic traits.

## Accounting for 'false absences'

Failure to record a species' presence in an occupied habitat patch is a common sampling problem when population size is small, individuals are difficult to detect, have large home ranges, or sampling effort is limited. Dividing a landscape into smaller

sampling units to estimate the occupancy of a target species is a widely used concept in ecology. Yet in many cases a species will not always be detected in a sampling unit even when present, resulting in biased estimates of occupancy. In an attempt to solve problems created by imperfect detectability, occupancy models have been developed where required data (detection/non-detection information) can be converted to mathematical statements and analysed using software programs such as PRESENCE<sup>2</sup>. The development of new occupancy models that can analyse binary data and make allowances for 'false absences' are providing ecologists with a new 'tool kit' to tackle the problem of monitoring rare and cryptic species<sup>3,4</sup>.

## Study aims and methods

My study applies occupancy estimation and modelling techniques to several rare and common woodland bird species, and provides recommendations for conducting more robust, less biased surveys and monitoring programs, given individual estimates of species' occupancy rates ( $\psi$ ) and detection probabilities ( $p$ ).

I conducted 5 visits to 20 sampling sites in the Lower Hunter between July 2008 and March 2009. Sites included **Aberdare SF, Werakata NP and private properties in the Kurri – Cessnock area**. Study questions included: 1) Do rare species occupy fewer sites than common species? 2) Do rare species have a lower probability of detection than common species? 3) What effect does the length of time spent surveying and the size of the area surveyed have on estimates of  $\psi$  and  $p$  of target species? and, 4) How many repeat visits to a sampling unit are required, to determine with varying power levels, that a target species is not present?

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<sup>2</sup> PRESENCE [www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/software/presence.html](http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/software/presence.html)

<sup>3</sup> Votja 2005

<sup>4</sup> MacKenzie *et al.* 2006

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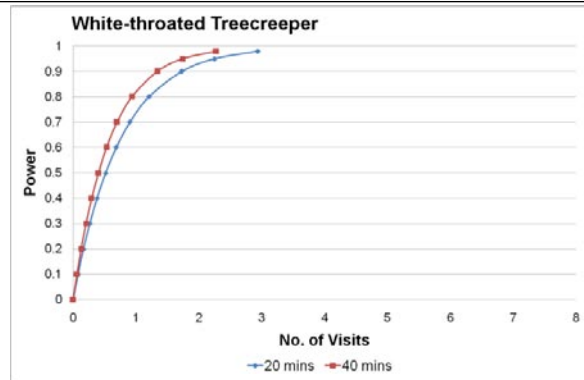
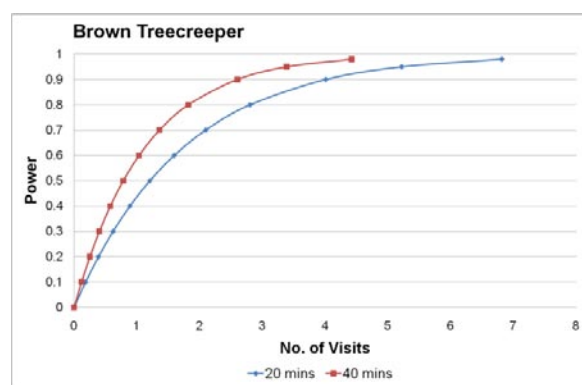
<sup>1</sup> HBOC 2008

# Woodland Bird Detectability in the Lower Hunter cont.

Ten rare species were paired with ten ecologically similar common species for comparison. Target rare species included the **Speckled Warbler, Grey-crowned Babbler, Gang-gang Cockatoo, Brown Treecreeper, Crested Shrike-tit, Little Lorikeet and Black-chinned Honeyeater**. The method chosen for bird surveys was the 2 ha / 20 minute area search and an extended 4 ha / 40 minute area search for comparison.

## What did I find out?

Results showed that target rare species occurred at significantly fewer sites than target common species and were also detected on significantly fewer survey occasions. Doubling the survey time and area resulted in an average increase in the  $\psi$  estimates of the rare species by 84%, compared with a 24% increase for the common species over 5 survey rounds. Doubling the survey time and area resulted in an average increase in the  $p$  estimates of the rare species by 61%, compared with a 26% increase for the common species over 5 survey rounds. Most target species were found to require 2-10 visits to an individual sampling site to determine occupancy (see Brown Treecreeper and White-throated Treecreeper graphs below), however, a species such as the Black-chinned Honeyeater, known to have a large home range, was found to require up to 98 visits to be 95% confident that it did not occupy a site (based on a 20 minute survey).



The number of visits that should comprise a survey will depend on the objectives of the study. If the objective is to infer, with a relatively high degree of confidence, the presence or absence of a species at a given location, then survey designs incorporating only 1 - 2 visits are unlikely to be satisfactory. Indeed, one commonly applied 20 minute / 2 ha area search was found to be inadequate for surveying the majority of target species in the Lower Hunter, particularly for rare and threatened species and those with a large home range. This has obvious implications, especially for pre-impact survey and assessment, owing to ongoing clearance of woodland habitat for new developments in the Lower Hunter region.

Overall, the results indicate that  $\psi$  and  $p$  are highly variable among rare and common woodland bird species. Survey designs that do not allow for this difference and do not incorporate a satisfactory number of repeat visits of a longer duration and over a larger area, are likely to substantially underestimate occupancy of many species, both rare and common. This study highlights the need for researchers to consider carefully the habitat requirements of each species, to check historical records of occupancy and consider the impact that further loss and fragmentation of remaining remnants will have on woodland bird richness and the long term viability of woodland bird populations in the Lower Hunter region.

If you would like to know more about my thesis results, please email [kristy.p@ecobiological.com.au](mailto:kristy.p@ecobiological.com.au)

Editor's Note: Kristy Peters presented the results of her Honours thesis at the June Club Night, initiating interesting discussion on survey development proposals and are also relevant to the Club's proposed monitoring of IBAs.

# Shorebird Photography at Stockton Sandspit

by Darryl Luck

While Stockton Sandspit is a haven for birdlife, it can be a challenge for the bird photographer. Knowing your subject's habits and of course when to visit, will help you capture those shots you're after.

## When to visit SSS to photograph birds???

While anytime is a good time to take photos, if you want to achieve better quality photos you need to have good light and the right tide. The best light for any photography is the hour after sunrise or the hour before sunset. This time is called the 'golden hour' as the light is softer and really highlights natural colours. Tide time is another crucial factor at Stockton Sandspit. Those who visit the location will know that the bird numbers and species present change with the tides. I find that the best time to be there is one or two hours before high tide. This allows you to be on the Sandspit before the bigger waders fly in from the Kooragang Dykes and other locations. My personal, favourite time to visit is when high tide is about an hour or two after sunrise. On these occasions I can be found lying on the ground before sunrise as I like to get out onto the Sandspit in low light while most birds are still at their night roosts. This allows me to get comfortable and set up without disrupting the arriving birds looking for their breakfast.

## Where to shoot on SSS???

This really depends on what you want to photograph.

## Flight photographs

The grassy edge above the beach line is a great spot for flight photos as you will encounter waders flying towards you as they approach the sandspit from across the river. Many of the waders do a few laps of the beach and sandspit as they choose where they will land. This location is my favourite spot to photograph the very skittish Eastern Curlews as they fly in low to check out the site.



Eastern Curlew

## Feeding behaviour photographs

A couple of choices here, as it depends on which species you want to capture. For the godwits and curlews, I find you need to set up in the same spot as above because they mostly feed along the beach. The only drawback with this is that they prefer to face out to the river and not the shoreline, so a bit of patience will get you some photos as they walk along the beach.

To photograph species such as spoonbills, egrets, herons and stilts, Big Island is the place to be. One problem with Big Island is that it's a popular nesting site and this often means you need to keep away to allow the birds their space. When nesting birds are not a problem then the river side of Big Island is the place I choose to set up. This spot will present you with feeding, behaviour, and landing or take-off shots. Many of the mentioned birds enjoy feeding on the incoming tide as the water rushes in from the river.



Bar-tailed godwit

## How do you get close???

The best tools you can have for shorebird photography are patience and a willingness to get down and dirty. If you draw attention to yourself the birds will fly or run off and this obviously defeats the purpose. Ask me how to get close to birds and my advice is "Be a cow". Cows and birds get on fabulously because they trust each other. Cows don't care about birds, so you need to pretend that you too are not interested in them. Make all movement in slow motion. You will be amazed how close you can get if you take your time and watch the bird's behaviour for any sign of your encroaching on its personal space. Every time you see a sign of a bird's awareness of you increasing (head bobbing, upright stance, alert calls, preparing to fly off etc), stop and stay still. Allow the bird to settle and return to its routine. It will gradually get used to your presence and if you're lucky they will even move towards you for a look.



## Shorebird Photography cont

If you can get down low and put up with the mud, sand, bug bites and those spiky little burrs, then you are well on your way to getting close. Even with no cover on the sandspit you can get very close to species like godwits, Red-capped Plovers and Pacific Golden Plovers. It's a great feeling to be accepted by the birds and get photos too.



Pacific Golden Plover



Double-banded Plover

### Lucky's top tips:

1. Remember that the bird's welfare always comes first.
2. Patience is a virtue. It can take a while to gain a bird's trust and be able to get close.
3. Take some food. It's easy to forget about hunger while you're taking photos, but it's also easy to become impatient when all you're feeling is hungry.
4. Dress in layers. It can be freezing cold in the early morning, but it can heat up quickly.
5. Take lots of photos, but also put the camera down once in a while and enjoy the moment.
6. Crawl in, crawl out. Don't just stand up and walk off when you're finished. Back out to a good distance before standing up.
7. Share your photos with your fellow HBOC members ☺

## Special Birthday



Sue Hamonet, a founding member of the Hunter Bird Observers Club and long-time Records Officer and Member of the Rarities Appraisal Committee recently completed eight decades of bird-watching - celebrated at the July Meeting - Congratulations Sue!  
Photo by John Mills

### STOP PRESS:

**Nesting Ibis Survey** - The White Ibis are nesting at the Hunter Wetlands Centre and it is important to get estimates of the number of nests. If you are interested in learning to count nests, contact Ann Lindsey [ann.lindsey@bigpond.com](mailto:ann.lindsey@bigpond.com) or on 4951 2008. Ibis count day will be Wednesday 25 August, meeting at 7am at Hunter Wetlands Centre carpark. Wear long sleeves and trousers and if wet, wellingtons.

### HBOC Membership Fees for Jan-Dec 2010

Membership Fees for 2010 are now overdue:  
\$30.00 Single and Family, \$5.00 Junior  
Membership forms can be obtained at Club Night or by downloading from the website:  
[www.hboc.org.au](http://www.hboc.org.au)

Please pay at Club Night or send cheque or money order payable to HBOC:  
PO Box 24, New Lambton 2305.



# Lake Macquarie's Flagship Species Program

Lake Macquarie City Council has initiated a flagship species program to engage with the community and to increase awareness and interest in conserving our diverse ecosystems. Some of these flagship species are typically charismatic, others play an essential role in the structure and functioning of an ecosystem.

There are nine broad ecosystem types within Lake Macquarie City: rainforest, forest, woodland, heath complex, waterways, wetlands, lake, coast, and ocean. For each ecosystem type, Council has identified a species that has scientific and community value. Each species acts as an icon for an ecosystem type and contributes to raising awareness of the threats to our environment. By focussing on the conservation of those species, the status of other species sharing that ecosystem as well as the ecosystems themselves can be improved through appropriate natural resource management.

Council is seeking volunteers to assist in monitoring these flagship species over the long-term and interested volunteers are encouraged to participate through specialist groups rather than directly through Council. Local specialist groups, including the Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC), have been invited to participate in the program due to the expertise and interest within its membership. It is anticipated that this approach will provide continued and long-term support for the flagship species program as well as input from interested volunteers with monitoring skills.

HBOC is partnering with Council to deliver the flagship

species program for two bird species. The Powerful Owl is the selected flagship species for forests. It prefers large tracts of forest and woodland, and mainly preys on gliders and possums. Hollow-bearing trees are essential habitat for the owls to successfully breed and although distributed across the City, populations have declined through loss of suitable trees and forest fragmentation. Knowledge of the population distribution and habitat requirements throughout the Powerful Owl's annual cycle can inform the management of suitable areas and protection of known or potential old growth nesting and roosting sites. Monitoring of the species will primarily be through observational reports submitted by HBOC members.

The Superb Lyrebird is the flagship species for rainforest. Its distribution appears to be limited by the availability of subtropical and temperate rainforests. Males have large territories, and both sexes require an abundance of ground-dwelling insects, spiders and bugs. They are expert mimics and can imitate almost any sound. Previous records indicate that the Lyrebird is found primarily in the Watagans in the west of the City, but there might be other suitable habitat in other parts of the City where, with careful vegetation management, Lyrebirds could once again return to breed.

For further details on the flagship species program and Lake Macquarie's ecosystems, please visit: [www.lakemac.com.au](http://www.lakemac.com.au) or phone 4921 0333.

**Nigel Barton**  
Sustainability Actuary, Lake Macquarie City Council

## Trip Report - Superb Lyrebird Survey – Watagan Mountains

Sunday 20 June 2010

The impetus to survey specifically for lyrebirds arose from Lake Macquarie Council's Flagship Species program, which includes Superb Lyrebird as a flagship species for Rainforest and Powerful Owl for Woodland. Council is hoping to engage the community in assisting with monitoring Flagship Species and understanding the need to preserve their habitat.

Winter is a prime time to listen for lyrebirds – the best-dressed males are in fine form, singing their extensive repertoires to attract females. On a beautiful winter's day, five keen bird-listeners surveyed Bangalow Road, which leads to Gap Creek camping and picnic area on the eastern side of the Watagans. Along the 4.5km of Bangalow Road and a few hundred metres of walking track towards Gap Creek at the end of the road, we identified 17 lyrebirds (saw only four, one of which was

a female). Their exquisite mimicry included: Green Catbird, Pied Currawong, Grey Butcherbird, Laughing Kookaburra, Eastern Whipbird, Crimson Rosella, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, King Parrot and Satin Bowerbird!

Other birds sighted in the forest included: Regent Bowerbird; Yellow-throated, White-browed and Large-billed Scrubwrens; Brown, Striated and Yellow Thornbills; Eastern Whipbird; Golden Whistler; White-naped, Yellow-faced and Lewin's Honeyeaters; and Green Catbird.

It will be interesting to survey another part of the Watagans and compare the results with Bangalow Road – apparently prime lyrebird habitat!

**Liz Crawford**

## Trip Reports

### Mid-week Outing, Kitchener

Tuesday 6 July 2010

Eleven hardy HBOC members set out from Newcastle and Port Stephens in drizzly rain for the aptly named Khartoum Hotel at Kitchener. When we got there it was fine but grey and overcast, not kind weather for birdwatching. Nevertheless we had a successful morning's birding with 60 species seen and 3 heard, including encroaching Bell Miners.

Our first stop was at the fire trail along Abernethy Road. It wasn't long before we were seeing Yellow-tufted and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, and Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Brown and Striated Thornbills. At the top of the property beside the trail we saw Scarlet, Rose and Eastern Yellow Robins. The highlight of the morning was a flock of eight Gang-gang Cockatoos that flew into trees on the eastern side of the trail just as we got back to our cars.

At the Poppet Head Park where we had morning tea we were greeted by a single Wonga Pigeon, as well as a nice selection of water birds on the dam, including a Black Swan with 4 cygnets and one Musk Duck. After morning tea we went about 800 metres down Quorrobolong Road to explore a section of the park that National Parks have recently fenced. Again we had some good birding in a small area. Sightings included 6 White-naped Honeyeaters, 3 Golden Whistlers and a White-throated Treecreeper. We finished our morning watching a pair of Weebills putting the finishing touches to their nest.

This section of Werakata National Park always produces a nice variety of birds. Let's hope that the accidental over-development of the little village of Kitchener does not go ahead.

**Robert Stewart**

### Bow Wow Gorge – Mt Vincent

Sunday 25 July 2010

A surprisingly large contingent of 15 adults and 2 youngsters turned up for this Sunday event.

We were warmly welcomed by the property owners, Pamela and Colin, and given a potted history of the area and their work to maintain/restore it – post logging and possibly pre-mining.

We then embarked on a fairly strenuous walking tour of the property. A couple of people decided to stay around the creek and the house while we toured. The landscape generally and in the rainforest is beautiful. The birding was more 'heards' of birds rather than flocks. The predominant bird in the rainforest seemed to be the Brown Gerygone although we also had Satin Bowerbirds, White-throated Treecreepers, Yellow-throated Scrubwrens - and a couple of lucky birdos saw a Bassian Thrush. There were also the crisp calls of the Eastern Whipbird and the Superb Lyrebird, Lewin's Honeyeaters and Brown-headed Honeyeaters.

Around the house, we saw Musk Lorikeets, some Wood Ducks, Superb and Variegated Fairy-wrens and heard a loud Shining Bronze-Cuckoo. There were also very cheeky Eastern Spinebills and Eastern Yellow Robins.

The weather was quite fine to start but we finished in fairly constant rain. However, it had again cleared for our post-walk brunch and bird call.

A big thanks to Pamela and Colin for allowing us to share the obvious enjoyment they have for their property.

**Anthony Gooden**

## Social Values of Australian Threatened Birds

Gill Ainsworth, a PhD candidate at Charles Darwin University, Darwin, is looking for volunteers all over Australia to help collect data on how Australians value native birds. The research is looking at the social values of Australian threatened birds, and will ultimately help to improve conservation of threatened birds.

The kinds of activities volunteers would be asked to do range from online searches to visiting local museums, libraries etc. It is interesting work for anyone keen to learn more about how birds have contributed to Australian society for example through their representation on stamps, coins and street names. The insight this research gives into Australian history and culture is fascinating.

There are many small projects which need to be repeated around the country at a local level.

If you would like to find out more and assist Gill in her research please visit this website and view her research summary:

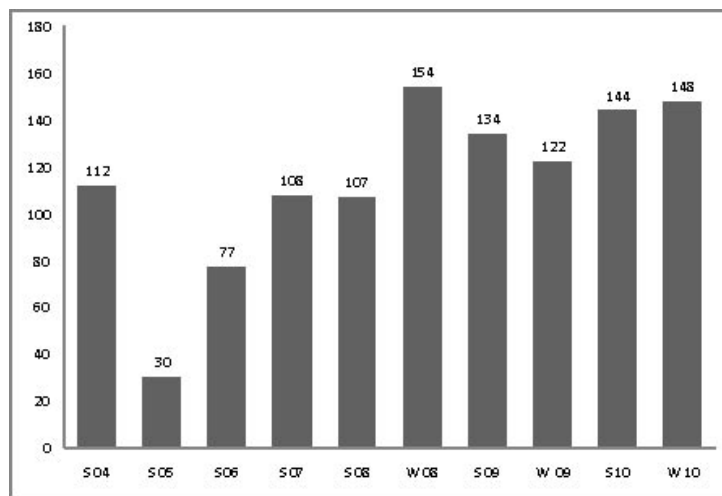
<http://www.cdu.edu.au/ser/profiles/GillAinsworthProfile.htm>

## Port Stephens and Myall River Waterbirds Survey

26 July 2010

Once again the annual winter survey of Port Stephens has generated very interesting information that helps build our knowledge about the importance of Port Stephens for waterbirds. The annual summer and winter surveys are boat based, with 14 observers covering six sub-sections of the Port, and are achieved with the vital assistance of DECCW (National Parks and Wildlife Service) and the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park Authority. The main focus is shorebirds but all waterbirds are recorded. This time we also surveyed for waterbirds in the Myall River, to assist DECCW who are currently engaged in a study of water quality in the river.

148 Australian Pied Oystercatchers were recorded in the latest survey – the second highest count ever, just pipped by 154 birds in winter 2008. 100+ birds have been recorded in almost all the summer and winter surveys. It is very clear that Port Stephens is a crucial location for this species which is classified as Endangered in NSW and with some published estimates of just 250 birds in the entire NSW population. It is a mystery where these birds breed, and for the best conservation outcomes for this Endangered species it will be important to be able answer that question in future.



### Summer (S) and Winter (W) counts of Australian Pied Oystercatcher in Port Stephens

424 Bar-tailed Godwits were in Port Stephens – the highest winter count for this migratory species in the three years to date of winter surveys. In winter, most birds have returned to their northern hemisphere breeding grounds leaving just the non-breeding birds (<2 years old). Since shorebirds are usually site-faithful, the winter counts can give good insights into breeding success.

In contrast, only 14 immature Eastern Curlews were found in this latest survey, compared with 223 birds in winter 2009. This suggests that breeding success has been poor, or that young birds failed to make the journey back to Australia for some reason.

In all, 8 shorebird species and 24 other waterbird species were recorded in this latest survey, and 1,785 individual birds in total. These summer and winter surveys are helping to build knowledge about the importance of Port Stephens for these species, and ultimately this will allow the best management plans to be put in place for them.

**Alan Stuart**

### Hunterbirding

**Hunterbirding** is an email group set up by HBOC that is run through the Yahoo Groups. It is a great way to keep in touch with the latest goings-on in Hunter Region birding. Members are able to report sightings, post questions to the group and get involved with group discussions on bird-related issues. If you are interested in joining the group then please visit the HBOC website for details on how to sign up: <http://www.hboc.org.au/index.cfm?menukey=27>. You can choose either to receive individual emails or a single daily digest.



## Twitchathon 2009 & Twitchathon 2010 Funds Distribution

Twitchathon 2009 has finally been wrapped up with over \$24,000 being raised towards BASNA's project to assist with the long-term monitoring of **Important Bird Areas** (IBA) in New South Wales. At the BASNA AGM held at Maitland in March 2010, the final prizes were presented to the winners, particularly the prize to David Eldridge, from the Bumbling Bee-eaters, who raised \$3154. The prize of a pair of Swarovski Binoculars was presented to David, by a representative of Swarovski Binoculars in Australia! Over summer, other prizes were presented to the winners at Hunter BOC and Central Coast BNSW meetings while other prizes were posted direct to the winners!

At the NSW BIGnet Meeting held in Centennial Park in Sydney during April, it was decided that the money raised by Twitchathon 2010 would go jointly to two projects, viz Murray Regions Nature Conservation Working Group **Bush Stone-curlew Captive Breeding and Release Project**, and the Kangaroo Island (SA) **Glossy Black-Cockatoo Rescue Fund**. Both these projects depend to a large degree on money raised by community groups and much of the work carried out is done by interested land owners and volunteers. BIGnet members believe that our Twitchathon funds can go a long way to help and encourage these groups, particularly as in both cases the local community numbers are low, from which to draw on for funds and for volunteer workers.

The **Bush Stone-curlew Captive Breeding and Release Project** involves an informative education campaign about these birds, a variety of on-ground habitat works, and the promotion of an extensive predator-control program amongst the local landholders. It also provides support and management for a captive breeding and release program for this threatened woodland bird. Working under a Scientific License from DECCW and an Animal Ethics Approval from DPI, the group commenced the Bush Stone-curlew program in 2002 with a breeding facility being established at Jindera NSW. There are now two breeding facilities located within the Murray Catchment, the original base at

Jindera, which houses four pairs of curlews and the other at Moulamein, which currently has five breeding pairs. In October 2008 they undertook their first release of 15 captive-bred Bush Stone-curlews at Moulamein. This was followed in 2009 by the release of a further 11 birds. Their tracking and monitoring data has indicated that the majority of these released birds have survived. Currently there are another 13 Bush Stone-curlews being prepared for release in spring 2010. Our Twitchathon funds will assist in predator control, maintenance of release pens and monitoring of released birds.

On Kangaroo Island, SA, a **Glossy Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project** was established in 1995, and there has been a gradual increase in the population from less than 200 to 340-360 birds in 2009. The Glossy Black-Cockatoo is a specialist feeder, relying almost entirely on seed on the Drooping Sheoak *Allocasuarina verticillata*. The Glossies are threatened by nest predation from the Common Brush-tailed Possum, nest hollow competition from feral honeybees, Little Corellas and Galahs and a shortage of suitable nest hollows. Inappropriate fire regimes, drought and land subdivision continue to contribute to losses of feeding and nesting habitat or reduction of its quality. The **Glossy Black-Cockatoo Rescue Fund** (GBRF) is maintained by the Nature Foundation of South Australia. Our sponsorship money will be given to the GBRF to be used to help keep core project activities going such as annual nest box maintenance, annual census, nest monitoring and revegetation/habitat restoration works.

Help contribute to these two projects by planning to take part in Twitchathon 2010 to be held on Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 October 2010. Information packs will be despatched in August 2010 so if you are not already on the list, contact the BASNA Office to be placed on the mailing list! Phone: 02 9647 1033 or email: [basna@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:basna@birdsaustralia.com.au)

**Alan Morris - Twitchathon Co-ordinator**

## New Members

The Club extends a warm welcome to New Member:

Roy Stanners of Eleebana

We hope to meet you at Club outings and meetings.

# Observations from Club Nights June - July 2010

Please note that all sighting reports published in HBOC's newsletter or its on-line forum (Hunterbirding) are unofficial and have not been confirmed by the club. Such reports are publicised in order that others can be made aware of the sighting(s) reported and have the chance to help verify them. Official records of bird sightings in the Hunter Region appear in the Annual Bird Report, for which written submissions supported by field notes and photographs are a vital part of the process for acceptance of locally uncommon/rare species.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Australian Raven	7	26.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Barking Owl	2	18.5.10	Howes Valley	R.McDonald
Bassian Thrush	2	13.5.10	Woko N.P.	T.Clarke
Black-shouldered Kite	3	29.6.10	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Brahminy Kite	1	19.5.10	Boat Harbour	T.Clarke
Brahminy Kite	1	1.6.10	Stockton Sandspit	T.Clarke
Brown Falcon	1	29.6.10	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Brown Goshawk	1	26.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Brown Honeyeater	2	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Budgerigar	6	21.5.10	10km east of "Windy" Stn	R.McDonald
Common Greenshank	4	31.5.10	Hexham Swamp	A.Lindsey
Crested Pigeon	16	25.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Double-banded Plover	2	23.5.10	Stockton Sandspit	T.Clarke
Eastern Rosella	14	25.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Eastern Whipbird	2	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Eastern Yellow Robin	3	20.6.10	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Eastern Yellow Robin	1	10.7.10	Stoney Creek	P.Durie
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	2	2.7.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Flame Robin	1	12.7.10	Wingen [garden]	G.Newling
Glossy Ibis	1	Jun, 2010	Belmont	R.McDonald
Golden Whistler	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Grey Butcherbird	2	24.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Grey Goshawk	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Grey Goshawk	1	2.7.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Grey-crowned Babbler	6	9.6.10	Bulga	R.Smith
Hooded Robin	2	13.7.10	Wallaby Scrub Road	G. & G. Drady
Jacky Winter	3	1.7.10	Ryhope Memorial Park	R.Walker
Little Wattlebird	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Long-billed Corella	3	31.5.10	Eleebana [Reserve]	A.Gooden
Long-billed Corella	~200	6.7.10	Bolwarra	H.Tarrant
Musk Lorikeet	10	23.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Musk Lorikeet	2	20.6.10	Blackbutt Reserve	P.Lightfoot
Nankeen Kestrel	11	29.6.10	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Peregrine Falcon	1	1-10.6.10	Nobbys & Fort Scratchley	J.Thomas
Pied Currawong	2	25.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Powerful Owl [dead]	1	17.4.10	Cardiff	per L.Huxtable
Radjah Shelduck	1	23.5.10	Bulahdelah	R.McDonald
Red Wattlebird	2	23.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Red-backed Fairy-wren	4	23.5.10	Crowdy Bay [Lighthouse]	R.McDonald
Red-necked Stint	2	1.6.10	Stockton Sandspit	T.Clarke
Red-rumped Parrot	30	1.6.10	Broke	R.Smith

## Observations from Club Nights June - July 2010 cont

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observer
Red-winged Parrot	3	21.5.10	Cassilis [Rest Area]	R.McDonald
Rufous Whistler	2	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	5	23.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Silvereeye	<10	10.7.10	Stoney Creek, Toronto	P.Durie
Southern Emu-wren	2	11.5.10	Winda Woppa	T.Clarke
Spangled Drongo	4	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Spangled Drongo	6+	Jun/Jul	Belmont	R.McDonald
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	1	13.7.10	Wallaby Scrub Road	G. & G. Drady
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater	Pr.	11.7.10	Doyles Creek	H.Tarrant
Striped Honeyeater	2	4.6.10	Shortland [garden]	H.Boyce
Striped Honeyeater	2	Jun, 2010	Raymond Terrace	F.Humphreys
Superb Fairy-wren	>10	10.7.10	Stoney Creek, Toronto	P.Durie
Swamp Harrier	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Swamp Harrier	1	29.6.10	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Tawny Grassbird	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Topknot Pigeon	50+	31.5.10	Freemans Waterhole	G.O'Connor
Variiegated Fairy-wren	4	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Wedge-tailed Eagle	1	26.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Wedge-tailed Eagle	4	29.6.10	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
Whistling Kite	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1	29.6.10	Mt Arthur Mine site	G.Newling
White-bellied Sea-Eagle	1	2.7.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
White-breasted Woodswallow	2	10.5.10	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	T.Clarke
White-cheeked Honeyeater	1	6.6.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
White-fronted Chat	12+	10.5.10	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	T.Clarke
White-headed Pigeon	2	11.7.10	Ash Island [Milham Pond]	N.McNaughton
White-winged Chough	~8	27.6.10	Cameron Park	R.Walker
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	100+	21.5.10	Pambalong N.R.	T.Clarke
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	1	23.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	24.5.10	Edgeworth	R.Boyce
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	12	9.6.10	Bulga	R.Smith
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	2	14.6.10	Horseshoe Beach	J.Thomas
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	21	25.5.10	Wyee	V.Moon
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	7	2.7.10	Hunter Wetlands Centre	P.Lightfoot
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	15	4.1.10	Shortland Golf Course	G.Dunlop

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